



U.S. Department  
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# News Release

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The nation's largest fully integrated health-care system, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the largest voluntary health organization dedicated to diabetes research, the American Diabetes Association (ADA), announced plans to join forces to collaborate on projects to find better treatments and improve care for people suffering from diabetes. The agreement was finalized today with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations at VA's national headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Diabetes is the nation's sixth-leading cause of death and can lead to heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and amputations. It is characterized by high blood sugar levels that result from defects in the body's ability to produce and/or use the hormone insulin. Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in the United States today.

Under the terms of this innovative agreement, VA and ADA will collaborate in defining the most effective ways to treat diabetes and will work together to assess blood glucose monitoring devices and other technology. The two organizations will also share information that will guide research and enhance collaboration in other areas of mutual interest. Likewise, VA and ADA will explore the feasibility of exchanging benchmarking information on quality, cost, and productivity.

In addition, ADA will distribute, at VA's request, its quality and technology assessment publications to VA medical centers. ADA publications include drug treatment monographs, technology reports and assessments, clinical practice bulletins, newsletters and project reports.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Kenneth W. Kizer M.D., M.P.H., VA's Under Secretary for Health, and John H. Graham IV, Chief Executive Officer of the American Diabetes Association.

"Diabetes is a devastating problem for veterans. Approximately 15 percent of veterans receiving care in VA hospitals and clinics suffer from diabetes, and this agreement will help our patients, while it also benefits diabetics throughout the country," said Kizer. "This is the type of partnership that helps both organizations achieve their mission of caring for people with diabetes," he added.

"The ADA is constantly looking for ways to help health-care delivery systems improve the quality of care they provide. Because the VA medical system is the largest single health-care network in the country, we have a unique opportunity to improve the care of many Americans with diabetes," said Graham.

VA's health-care system has 173 hospitals; nearly 600 outpatient clinics; 206 counseling centers; 73 home health programs; 131 nursing homes; 40 domiciliaries; and various contract programs. ADA is the nation's leading voluntary health organization supporting diabetes research and has offices in all 50 states. ADA operates programs in more than 800 communities nationwide.